

THE SUN'S CORONA.

From the London Spectator.

One problem after another presented by the study of the sun has been mastered by astronomers and physicists. They have ascertained what are the substances of which his globe is constituted, they have learnt something of the condition in which those substances exist, they have detected the secret of the rose-colored prominences which spring suddenly into view when his orb is eclipsed. Later came the simultaneous discovery by Janssen and our ingenious countryman Lockyer, that the spectrum of the prominences can be studied when the sun is not eclipsed, a discovery fruitful in promise, if it has not yet brought with it all the results which had been looked for. More important still was the invention by Mr. Huggins, *facile princeps* amongst astronomical spectroscopists, of a method by which the prominences can be seen ("not merely rendered visible," as Sir John Herschel justly says) by means of the spectroscope. Thus it has become possible to inspect the figure, and what is yet more striking, the changes of figure, of these amazing objects. Astronomers have availed themselves at once of this ingenious method, and so far as the prominences are concerned little seems left to be discovered.

But one imposing phenomenon presented during total solar eclipses remains yet to be interpreted. The crown of glory which suddenly bursts into view when the sun's orb is totally concealed, has proved a source of perplexity to astronomers and physicists until now, and may, perchance, yet foil their attempts at explanation for many years to come. It has been regarded as a lunar appendage by some, as a solar appendage by others, while others again have supposed it to be merely an optical phenomenon. In August, 1869, during the eclipse which offered such important information respecting the colored prominences, the corona was left uninterpreted. In August, 1869, through several observations scrutinized attentively with the powerful instruments now available to the astronomer, it still foiled their efforts. The question which is perhaps of all others most in the thoughts of the astronomer, is whether the observations to be made during the eclipse of December next will suffice to master this stubborn problem.

If we consider the matter aright, we shall see that the solution of the difficulty can hardly fail to afford most interesting information respecting the physical habitudes of the sun, may even respecting relations affecting the whole economy of the solar system. Regarded as a solar appendage, the corona is, in some respects, the most amazing object within the limits of the planetary scheme. It has been seen (under favorable conditions) to extend several degrees from the eclipsed sun; and a degree, in the case of an object situated at the sun's distance, corresponds to a length of seventeen hundred thousands of miles. When we remember that the object, whatever it is, is not a mere plane surface (as one is apt to conceive in regarding a phenomenon of the sort), but surrounds the sun on every side, we begin to recognize the enormous volume which it occupies. Those radiations whose structure is so perplexing are in reality enormous streams of matter, whether continuous or discrete remains yet to be determined. These streams, too, are not necessarily directed towards or from the sun, as one is apt to suppose from their ordinary aspect. It is not even probable that they are so situated, since observers of repute have noticed that the radiations of the corona are not symmetrical.

Is it safe to hazard a guess as to the real nature of the corona, when a few months may afford positive information respecting its structure? Let us consider what we know already. It has sometimes happened that astronomers have remained in doubt respecting a problem whose solution was in reality in their hands. Galileo was content to remain perplexed by the strange changes of Saturn's appearance, when it was possible for him to have anticipated by simple reasoning the discovery of the real nature of the planet's appendage. The predecessors of Sir W. Herschel suffered discovery after discovery to escape them, because they would not be at the pains to discuss in full their own observations. The wonderful success of that great astronomer was due to his appreciation of the fact that observations can only be fruitful when submitted to scrutiny and analysis. It appears to us that the observations already made upon the corona only require careful consideration to reveal with tolerable distinctness the real nature of this object.

Setting aside the theories which associate the corona with the moon or with our own atmosphere, as altogether untenable in the face of recent discoveries, let us inquire whether we have any reason to believe that the portion of space apparently occupied by the corona is really tenanted by material substance. We cannot suppose that a solar atmosphere of any sort occupies this region. For it is incredible that objects of such a nature as the colored prominences—flames thousands of miles in height—should exist at the bottom of an atmosphere whose depth must be estimated by hundreds of thousands of miles, and which would be subjected also to the enormous attractive energies of the sun's mass. If of our own atmosphere, with a probable depth of about a hundred miles, and attracted only by the relatively insignificant forces of terrestrial gravity, is yet capable of exerting a pressure of nearly a ton on every square foot of surface, how inconceivably vast would be the pressure of an atmosphere thousands of times as deep (even supposing the visible bounds of the corona to indicate its true limits), and attracted by the sun, at whose surface four or five pounds would weigh a hundredweight!

The material particles, then, which form the corona must be of such a nature as not to press towards the sun. In other words, they must travel around him. As to the nature of these motions, we are led by the irregular appearance of the corona to believe that the bodies forming the corona travel in paths having every variety of form.

Thus we are led to the conclusion that they must be somewhat of the nature of those meteoric bodies which reach our own atmosphere. We know that the meteors reach us along paths so eccentric in figure that many of these bodies must have come from beyond distances exceeding those at which Uranus and Neptune circle round the sun. And what is more to the purpose, we know that large numbers of those which are intercepted by the earth would otherwise have passed to the immediate neighborhood of the sun.

Now for one meteor which the earth intercepts there must be millions on millions which pass on their course, past her path, without being interfered with by her. And for each meteor-system which passes close past the earth's track there must (according to all reasonable probability) be millions of systems which make no such approach. It is conceivable that these countless millions of meteors and meteor-systems, undoubtedly existing in the sun's neighborhood, should remain wholly invisible when the sun is

eclipsed? Supposing them—brilliantly illuminated as they must be, owing to their proximity to the sun—to be visible during total eclipses, we should expect them to present precisely the appearance actually exhibited by the corona. Thus we are led at once by a priori and by a posteriori considerations to judge that the corona consists of multitudes of meteoric bodies, travelling in orbits having every variety of figure and position around the central luminary. But if this be the case, we should expect that some traces of the outlying portions of this vast congeries of systems would be visible after sunset and before sunrise. We find, accordingly, that there can be traced in the evening towards the west, and in the morning towards the east, that faint luminous gleam known as the zodiacal light. This light grows brighter towards the horizon beneath which the sun lies at the time. Are we to suppose this increase of light stops abruptly at that point? It is reasonable to conclude, on the contrary, that the light increases in brilliancy up to the very place occupied by the sun. So that here again we have evidence accounting satisfactorily for the existence of a glory of light round the sun during total eclipses.

We venture to predict that if the corps of observers now being formed under the auspices of the Royal Astronomical Society should be successful in finding new evidence respecting the corona, that evidence will not be found opposed to the views we have expressed above.

WEST POINT.

The New Graduating Class at the Military Academy—Names and Standing of its Members.

The class which graduates at the West Point Military Academy this year is one of the largest ever examined at the Academy. It numbers fifty-nine members, whereas the class of last year only numbered thirty-nine. During the four years that the class has been in the Academy it has lost but a single member.

The names and standing of the members of the class are as follows:—

Table with columns: Order, Name, State, Rank, and other details for the West Point Military Academy class.

TAKING TO WATER.

Pittsburg's Pet Sensation—A Female Rowing Club—The Ladies' Rights to be Put into Practice.

The Pittsburg Commercial of yesterday has the following:— Judging from the rumors that have been afloat in aquatic circles during the past few days, Pittsburg is soon to be treated to an aquatic sensation. It is nothing less than the entering into aquatic contests of an element that has never been known there before.

During last fall and the present aquatic season considerable attention has been directed to a girl about seventeen years of age, who almost every day has made her appearance in a skiff on the Monongahela, and by her spindly oarsman ship has come to be considered the female champion of Pittsburg. She usually rows down from a point above the railroad bridge to the Point, and sometimes up the Allegheny. She displays, as is stated by those who have seen her, a skill that would do credit to the best oarsmen in the city, and has on several occasions made excellent time from the railroad bridge to the Point and return.

Early during the present season some of her friends endeavored to get her to enter the lists and contest in some of the races of the present season. She refused, and evidently did not wish to enter a field where there was so strong an element of rowdiness. She stated that she had adopted rowing partially as a pastime and to enable her to carry her father to his work, as he was at that time employed in one of the rolling-mills on the South Side, and she wished to convey him over the river early in the morning.

From the grace and skill with which she handles her skiff, it is not surprising that she has attracted much of the public, but it may not be improper to state that her first name is "Lottie," and that she resides in the Eighth ward.

By a recent law Maryland pays \$121,130 annually in pensions to 1514 soldiers of the War of 1812.

FRENCH AND ENGLISH GIRLS.—The following passage is from "Notes on Burgundy," by Charles Richard Weed, just published in London.—The foolish and often insane attempt, so prevalent, unfortunately, with our countrymen, to ape their betters, is rarely seen in France. Contentment with their lot seems to be very general; and, if it is a feature of the French character to be amused with what we should, perhaps, call trifles, this custom has at least the advantage of occupying time harmlessly. It is impossible, of course, to be the guest of a French family, where there are daughters, without being struck by the great contrast between their life and that of the English girls. This contrast appeared to me now to be more striking than ever; and this is the case; for, while the French girl has been, so to speak, standing still, her life before marriage running in the same narrow domestic groove, our English girls have been accorded more liberty, of which they have not been slow to take advantage, with what result, in many cases, is well known. Thus encouraged to indulge in amusements of the most exciting nature, a quiet home becomes a bore, and their young life is spent in frivolities which are sorry preparations for the years when they hope to be matrons. There is, doubtless, much to be said against the French system of marrying girls to men whose characters they have little or no opportunity of studying; but, though continental marriages are, as a rule, the result of natural love, it is certain that in France a matrimonial bond of glittering but unreal splendor is rarely, if ever, succeeded by a wifehood of disappointment and unhappiness.

POPULAR SIMILES.

As wet as a fish—as dry as a bone, As live as a bird—as dead as a stone; As plump as a partridge—as poor as a rat, As strong as a horse—as weak as a cat; As hard as a flint—as soft as a mole, As white as a lily—as black as coal; As plain as a pikestaff—as rough as a bear, As light as a feather—as sharp as an awl; As heavy as lead—as light as a feather, As heavy as time—uncertain as weather; As hot as an oven—as cold as a frog, As gay as a lark—as sick as a dog; As slow as a tortoise—as swift as the wind, As true as the Gospel—as false as mankind; As thin as a herring—as fat as a pig, As proud as a peacock—as blithe as a prigg; As savage as tigers—as mild as a dove, As stiff as a poker—as limp as a glove; As blind as a bat—as deaf as a post, As cool as a cucumber—as warm as toast; As fat as a flour-bar—as round as a ball, As blunt as a hammer—as sharp as an awl; As red as a ferret—as safe as the stocks, As bold as a thief—as sly as a fox; As straight as an arrow—as crooked as a bow, As yellow as saffron—as black as a sloe; As bright as glass—as clean as a gristle, As neat as my nail—as tough as a whistler; As good as a feast—as bad as a witchee, As light as day—as dark as a pitch; As brisk as a bee—as dull as an ass, As full as a tick—as solid as brass; As lean as a greynod—as rich as a Jew, And ten thousand similes equally new.

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ESTATE OF JOSEPH MOTTEZ, DECEASED. Letters Administration on the above-mentioned estate having been granted to the undersigned, all persons indebted to said estate will please make payment, and those who have claims against the same present them without delay to J. FREDERICK LIST, Conveyancer, Philadelphia, May 18, 1870.

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